

Mountain-top tips and cool things

September 23, 2013

This is a non-exhaustive list of non-technical advice and cool details which you may find useful. Please complete it!

A bit of history...

1. Cerro means “hill” in Spanish. “Tololo” means “closest to the edge” in the local pre-columbian dialect.
2. When the telescope was being built, the local farmers were concerned that the astronomers would blow the clouds away from the sky. In fact the shape of the mountain does protect it from clouds (CTIO tour guide, 2013).

Before the night starts

3pm: observer’s “morning”

1. Cereals are always available in the kitchen and they are surprisingly good!
2. On Saturday, you can join the tours of the 1.5m and the Blanco, leaving from the dining room at 2ish. There is always English translation available and the guide will probably ask you to say a few words when stopping in the Blanco control room.
3. During your day off, if you wake up at 4ish and come out of your room, the combination of sun, breeze, and the smell of food from the kitchen is a very nice way to start the day.

On the way to the Blanco

1. Walk there, and take the shortcut rather than the main road! (if it gets too steep, it means you missed the steps, come back, don’t die, the DES needs you!)
2. Try to see the “viscacha” (very cute small edible animal). According to Jim, they gather to watch the sunset.
3. This is the time of the day when foxes try to be your friend and get some food.
4. Say “Hi” to Rasicam.

Dinner time

Dinner

1. The desserts... (try the jelly and the mote con huesillos).
2. One of the cooks is “el rey de empanadas”. He can give you the recipe.

Night lunch sheet

1. Don't forget to fill it in by 2pm, it makes the night so much easier!
2. Make sure you tick separate columns, or you will get steak and jam in the same sandwich.
3. The chocolate cookies are the best!
4. If you ask for tea in your thermos, it is very likely to taste like coffee, so you probably want to ask for coffee.
5. Be experimental, it makes the night more interesting: some optional ingredients are VERY surprising.

During the night

1. There is a sound system in the control room.
2. One of Obstat alarms sounds very much like a chicken.
3. There is a system that turns the light on inside the room only when the telescope door is closed.
4. Be a posh observer and say "tonight is photometric" (fancy way to say that it's going to be a good night of observation).
5. Make sure you come with the telescope operator at least once when he goes up to open/close the louvers: the dome is all windy, and dark, and noisy from the telescope moving and the nitrogen pump.
6. When you go outside during the night,
 - There is some kind of jingling noise from the dome. It is the liquid nitrogen pumping process.
 - If you go before the moon rises, stay outside for ten minutes and you will see the milky way in all its splendor! If you come from the Northern Hemisphere it is even more impressive! Check out the Magelanic clouds!
 - It feels very dark and cold but at the same time you know that you are surrounded with astronomers taking observations in all the surrounding domes... this is a good time to be philosophical.